

CAN PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT CREATE WORKPLACE HAPPINESS?

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ABSTRACT

The psychological contract is a newly crafted organizational term that construes the fulfilment and non-fulfilment of organizational relationships in terms of mutual obligations, expectations and promises. A revolutionizes in demand for human resource and increase in the flexibility of the workforce have changed which impacting the employer-employee relationship and transformed the strength of the contract. Technological shifts, economic transforms and globalization have made organizational environments ever more cut-throat and have often caused employee-employer correlations to be converted into progressively transactional and jittery. In penetrating for equilibrium in contemporary employment relationships, one of the utmost challenges is to match the needs of organizations and employees. It is easy to break the psychological contract and to mess up the relationship between employee and employer. This breach can happen at any time with any employee and empirical research demonstrates a psychological contract has a significant impact on workplace happiness. For example, when employee expectations are met then they become happy and committed to their organizations. Researchers have posited that the psychological contract generates workplace happiness. Therefore, we conclude that the substantiation continues to persuasively suggest that psychological contract is correlated with and often pave the ways workplace happiness and that experimentally enhancing optimistic emotions leads to improved outcomes in the workplace.

KEYWORDS: Workplace Happiness, Psychological Contracts & Breach of Psychological Contract

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PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT: AN INTRODUCTION

In the new-fangled business environment, human resources experiencing gigantic changes affecting the present working of organizations in terms of nature of jobs demand which has gone beyond the traditional structure of organizations. The organization cannot be competitive or sustainable without mending a psychological contract at work. The form of the psychological contract is rarely explored and is often left unspoken and unaddressed. The psychological contract has been defined as “individuals’ beliefs, shaped by the organization regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organizations” (Rousseau, 1995, p. 9). The exchange relationship between organization and employee ranges the entire contract spectrum from strictly legal to purely psychological (Spindler 1994). The psychological contract is the unrecorded and unspoken needs and wants between an employee and an employer. ‘The set of expectations held by the individual employee that specify what the individual and the organisation expect to give to and receive from each other in the course of their working relationship’ (Sims 1994). The dynamism of the psychological contract depends on how far the employee believes the organization is in gratifying its apparent obligations above and beyond the formal written contract of employment. It is implicit and thus unofficial and includes mutual responsibilities and expectations. Compliance motivating force replicates the degree of shared belief and trust (DeMeuse & Tornow 1990). According to

Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni (1994), 'The psychological contract acts to sustain the employment relationship over time'. The psychological contract is an emotional bond between employer and employee. Psychological contracts aid to accomplish two tasks i. e. they help to forecast the kinds of outputs employers will get from employees, and they help to envisage what kind of reward the employee will get from investing time and effort in the organization (Sparrow & Hiltrop 1997). It relates how each employee expects to be treated and the kind of value they seek from the organisation and more significantly what it expects in return.

Psychological contracts can be written off as either transactional or relational (MacNeil 1985). Extensive research has established that psychological contracts can be portrayed in two different ways: transactional and relational. A transactional contract is based on economic or extrinsic factors, tends to be characteristically defined, and its time frame is finite and short-term (Alcover, Martínez-Iñigo, & Chambel, 2012; De Cuyper & De Witte, 2006). The essence of the transactional components of the psychological contract can be expressed as 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay' (Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni 1994) or as the 'effort exchange/effort bargain' — that is, the mutual process of exchanging effort to reward (Marks et al. 1997). By contrast, the relational contract establishes and maintains a relationship involving monetizable and non- monetizable exchanges (Rousseau, 1990). This type of contract can be characterized by a focus on open-ended relationships involving considerable investments by employees and employers (for example, loyalty, commitment and trust in management on behalf of the employee, and job security and training on behalf of the employer (Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni 1994). Guzzo and Noonan ((1994)) stressed that the fulfilment of the psychological contract in both transactional and relational terms influences employee loyalty and commitment. The influence of the contract is high when organizations bring in into practices to amplify employability within the organization.

This paper discusses the key conceptual parts of the psychological contract which comprises the significance of psychological contracts in the organization and the breach of the psychological contract and its consequences. And finally, shed light on how psychological contract engender workplace happiness.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS IN THE ORGANIZATION

Psychological contracts are dynamic, continuously evolving from beginning to end organizational experiences. A psychological contract in organizations induces employees to fulfil commitments. If employees perceive that the organization treats them fairly, respects their efforts and rewards them justly, they will feel obligated to reciprocate by working hard and avoiding harming the organization (Gouldner, 1960). The psychological contract is mainly built to generate steadiness in the working environment and enhance the relationship between the organization and the employee (Beardwell, Holden & Claydon, 2004; Karagonlar et al., 2016; Low et al., 2016; Sparrow and Cooper, 1998). For that reason proactively managing employees' prospects turn out to be an ongoing and obligatory course of action. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) explained that the job features and work experience affects the emotional aspects of the employees. When employees perceive that the company takes care and rewards their contributions, the employees will feel emotionally attached to the company (Allen & Shanock, 2013). The organization must impose the contract to signify that the organization has the decisive supremacy in the employee and employer relationship. Given the supporting evidence, the psychological contract is important to any organizational setting as it creates the desired image that the employee wishes to be part of (Lumley, Coetzee, Tladinyane, & Ferreira, 2011; Purcell, 2012; Raineri, Paille, & Morin, 2012).

To handle the modern day's challenges employer-employee relationship is the lone way. The economic downturn will create new challenges; thus, making it increasingly difficult for employers to fulfil their side of the psychological contract (Adkins, Werbel, & Farh, 2001; Zhao et al., 2007). All these organisational transitions in the global arena can be regarded as times of hope and exhilaration, but in the same breath as a time of great uncertainty (Barnard, Stoll, & Centre for Understanding Behaviour Change, 2010; Gersick, 1991). These uncertainties can contribute to how employees feel and act towards their employers. The psychological contract helps explain, address and reinforce those changes/uncertainties which validated it to regain attention (De Lange, Van der Heijden, De Jong, & Schaufeli, 2011; Guest, Isaksson, & De Witte, 2010). Therefore, maintaining the psychological contract is of the utmost importance for securing a healthy and lasting work relationship, as fulfilled psychological contracts lead to increased job satisfaction and productivity (Kabar & Barrett, 2010).

With the ever-changing times, the psychological contract has also evolved, meaning that employees need not only do as expected, but are required to add a level of innovation to keep their jobs (Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2008). From imposed relationship to mutual relationship, the definition of psychological contract has changed. Therefore, understanding the change and effectively managing the modification in psychological contracts can help organizations thrive. Thus, organizations are gradually more acknowledging psychological contract as a noteworthy aspect of the employment relationship. On the contrary, for a while organizations do not realize they are violating an unwritten but the important social contract they have with the workforce; they are unaware of the impact they are having (Yankelovich, 1994).

BREACH OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND CONSEQUENCES

The breach of a psychological contract can have an attitudinal effect on employees. In every large or small organization and in every workgroup the effect occurs. The more employers expect from the employee, more will be the effect on work behaviour. According to Morrison and Robinson (1997), psychological contract breach as "an affective and emotional experience of disappointment, frustration, anger and resentment that may emanate from an employee's interpretation of a contract breach and its accompanying circumstances". Employees can have different types of psychological contracts with their organization and accordingly employees may react in a different way to a breach of their psychological contract. The breach in the psychological contract is a potential source of employee reports of emotional exhaustion ((Gakovic and Tetrick, 2003). A breach in the psychological contract can have incredibly noteworthy unintended consequences.

Bal and Smith (2012) have asserted that it is an emotional reaction among employees to breaches of the psychological contract, showed the reactions influenced their attitudes and behaviours towards work. The reason that psychological contracts need to remain intact owes to the important negative outcomes that can arise for the organization in the form of actual turnover, lowered satisfaction and performance, and decrease in citizenship behaviour (Robinson, 1996; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Frequently a broken psychological contract is left unrepaired, which barely exacerbates the impact and consequences. Sverdup (2012) asserted: "Breach is always negatively related to work outcomes" (p. 30). These negative consequences can be exhibited in the form of experiencing stress during the job which produces strain (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), leading to emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). As a result, acknowledging the breach and making efforts to renovate it is decisive to regaining engagement and interrupting the effects of emotional contagion. As soon as employees experience a breach of their psychological contract, they can experience different reactions, ranging from attitudinal to behavioral reactions toward the organization (Kickul & Lester, 2001). The

breach of an employee's psychological contract is also positively correlated to the employee's intention to leave the organization, which is an additional widely researched attitudinal job outcome (Hess & Jepsen, 2009). After a psychological contract breach, employees may be less willing to exert additional effort on behalf of the organization and have a lower desire to remain employees of their organization (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). Also, it has been found that psychological contract breach was significantly and positively related to intention to turnover (Suazo, 2009; Zhao et al., 2007). The breach of the psychological contract has a significant impact on happiness in the workplace.

WORKPLACE HAPPINESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

According to Fisher (2010), happiness at work is “an umbrella concept that includes a large number of constructs ranging from transient moods and emotions to relatively stable attitudes and highly stable individual dispositions at the person level to aggregate attitudes at the unit level”. Being happy at work is essential and the organization also recognizes the importance of people “Happiness at work is about mindfully making the best use of the resources you have, to overcome the challenges you face. Actively relishing the highs and managing the lows will help you maximize your performance and achieve your potential. And this not only builds your happiness but also that of others – who will be affected and energized by what you do” (Andrew, 2011). Only satisfied with the job is not something called happiness. Alexander Kjerulf, says that happiness is the “ultimate productivity booster”. People who are happy at their workplace “get promoted faster, earn more, get more support, generate better and more creative ideas, achieve goals faster, interact better with colleagues and bosses, receive superior reviews, learn more, and achieve greater success (Pryce, 2010:2-3).” Therefore, to sustain human resources for the long run it is important to creating happiness at the workplace. Employers should be responsive to the benefits of creating an environment that promotes happiness because their organizations will be benefited from increases in productivity and employee retention (Proudfoot et. al., 2009).

Workplace happiness can be achieved only when there is a positive relationship between employer and employee. Once the employee commences working at the organization, reciprocal expectations are shaped. In today's era where an employee is considered to be an asset thus, it is the prime obligation of an employer to look after their emotions. When people like what they do, then they feel good, they contribute and make a difference and also like people they work with. When arriving at a new place of work, people are shaped by their previous experiences and now they become further shaped by what happens in the new environment. An individual's consider psychological contracts fulfilled when promises are kept or expectations met (Rousseau, 1989; Kickul & Lester, 2001), which results in happiness in the workplace. Increasing workplace happiness dramatically reduces absenteeism and employee turnover. Hess and Jepsen (2009) established that there is a correlation between psychological contract fulfilment and three cognitive reactions: satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention. In an employment relationship, employees' expectations and employer promises which are exchanged between them which have to be maintained then only an organization can uphold their human resources.

The contract is poised of an individual's perceptions about what they expect the organization to provide (competitive wages, advancement opportunities, job security) in return for what they provide the organization (a fair day's work, loyalty) (Lester, Turnley et. al., 2002). The fulfilment of the aspects enclosed in the job contract is more likely to give the employees a sense of emotional attachment to the organisation (Kiazad, Kraimer & Seibert, 2014b; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Happiness and positive states of people at work contribute to increased organizational success and commitment (Gavin and Mason, 2004). Happiness proceeds as a causal mechanism that brings

about numerous positive states within the workplace and is at the heart of positive organizational psychology (Money et al., 2008).

Happiness at work does not just happen. It takes a persistent, long-term effort from employer and employee together. It is the responsibility of employers' to cultivate positive and happy cultures where human resources and organizational success is shared. According to Asiyabi and Mirabi (2012), a happy workforce can bring their happiness from their workplace to home and also transfer their happiness from their home to the workplace. In a situation where employees believe that they are not rewarded adequately, their propensity towards turnover will be increased (Shropshire & Kadlec, 2012). Increasing workplace happiness dramatically reduces absenteeism and employee turnover conversely higher job satisfaction and higher levels of commitment correlate with a fulfilled psychological contract that reduced turnover intent (Flood, Turner, Ramamoorthy, and Pearson, 2005). In an employment relationship, employees' expectations and employer promises which are exchanged between them which have to be maintained then only an organization can sustain their human resources. Hence, it can be stated that psychological contract is one of the key element of workplace happiness.

CONCLUSIONS

At the core of one's association with work, be alive with the psychological contract embraced one's perceptions and beliefs concerning the exchange agreement that exists between employees and employer. Between employer and employee, psychological contracts do matter. It can be possible, that the psychological contract itself, impacts employee happiness and on the whole happiness at work. Employees generally leave due to unmet workplace needs and the lack of resources to execute their organizational roles. This has made it more difficult for organizations to enhance employees' commitment and retain talents in today's workforce. For that reason, mutual understanding and relationship between employer and employee will be a significant consideration to deal with the changing nature of employee with the expectation of the employer. So it can be concluded that by enriching psychological contract at the workplace, an organization can create happiness at the workplace.

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